



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Food and
Nutrition
Service

Mountain
Plains
Region

1244 Speer Boulevard
Denver, CO
80204-3585

NOV 04 2004

Reply to
Attn of: SP-05-02

Subject: HealthierUS School Challenge

STATE AGENCY DIRECTORS - Colorado ED, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri ED,
(Special Nutrition Programs) Montana OPI, Nebraska, North Dakota,
South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming

In celebration of National School Lunch Week, Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman launched "The HealthierUS School Challenge." The challenge is a USDA initiative that will recognize schools that have already taken steps to improve their school nutrition environment and will encourage other schools to follow their lead. The challenge has been issued to elementary schools and will expand to higher grades next year.

HealthierUS Schools can be certified as either "Silver" or "Gold" Schools, according to a Self Assessment Tool which details the standards that must be met. The school's completed Assessment Tool must be evaluated by a local review panel, and endorsed by the school's leadership, including its principal. Completed Assessment Tools will be forwarded to the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) through the State Child Nutrition Office for final review. Once a school successfully meets the challenge it will be awarded a plaque celebrating its accomplishment. In addition, the school will be further recognized on the USDA Team Nutrition Web site and may be chosen to participate in special media events.

A memo signed by FNS Under Secretary, Eric Bost, was sent to all Chief State School Officers on October 21, 2004. A brochure describing the initiative was enclosed and also distributed to State Agencies as well as school district food service directors. We are enclosing a copy of this memo and brochure for your reference.

Further details on the HealthierUS School Challenge can be found on Team Nutrition's Web site at www.fns.usda.gov/tn. The Assessment Tool and all back up material are available there for review and download.

State Agency Directors

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If you have any questions, please contact Gina O'Brian of my staff at (303) 844-0354.

Darlene Sanchez

DARLENE SANCHEZ

Regional Director

Special Nutrition Programs

Enclosure



United States Department of Agriculture

OCT 21 2004

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Chief State School Officer:

Overweight children and the growing risk of obesity are serious concerns for schoolchildren in the United States. The Department of Agriculture (USDA) believes that schools and the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) should take a leadership role in helping students learn to make healthy lifestyle choices.

In celebration of National School Lunch Week, Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman launched "The HealthierUS School Challenge." The challenge is a USDA initiative that will recognize those concerned schools that have already taken steps to improve their school nutrition environment and will encourage other schools to follow their lead. The challenge has been issued to elementary schools and will expand to higher grades next year.

Elementary schools wishing to participate in the challenge must complete an assessment demonstrating that they meet the criteria for either Silver or Gold recognition. The first criterion is that the school must be enrolled as a Team Nutrition School. Team Nutrition is USDA's comprehensive plan for promoting the nutritional health of the Nation's schoolchildren and supports schools' efforts to improve their nutrition environment. Other challenge criteria include offering school lunches that meet USDA nutrition standards, a participation rate in the NSLP that is higher than the national average participation rate, the inclusion of nutrition education and physical activities during the school day and adherence to guidelines established by USDA for food offered or sold in schools outside the school meal programs. Once a school successfully meets the challenge it will be awarded a plaque celebrating its accomplishment. In addition, the school will be further recognized on the USDA Team Nutrition Website and may be chosen to participate in special media events.

Ultimately, USDA would like to see all schools take the challenge and *Go for the Silver!* or *Go for the Gold!* We hope that States will strongly encourage their schools to become involved in the challenge and will do all that they can to facilitate their participation. Enclosed is a brochure that describes the initiative. It will also be distributed to State Agencies responsible for Child Nutrition Programs and school district food service directors. For further information, please visit our Web site at www.fns.usda.gov/tn.

Thank you in advance for your support of this initiative and your dedication to child nutrition and health.

Sincerely,

Eric M. Bost
Under Secretary
Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services

Enclosure

Details

Check the Team Nutrition Web site for all the details. The Assessment Tool and all back up material are available on the Web site for review and download. The Team Nutrition Web site address is www.fns.usda.gov/tn.



Team Nutrition is the nutrition education initiative of the Child Nutrition Programs. All Team

Nutrition materials and support are available free of charge to schools participating in the school meals programs.

Take the Challenge!

- Visit the Team Nutrition Web site at www.fns.usda.gov/tn
- Review the standards/criteria
- Download the Self Assessment form
- Convene a review panel
- Complete the review
- Obtain the required approvals and signatures
- Submit the completed form to the State agency

Certification as a *HealthierUS* School is for two years, the year of approval and the subsequent year.

HealthierUS

The *HealthierUS* initiative is based on the premise that increasing personal fitness and becoming healthier is critical to achieving a better and longer life. *HealthierUS* promotes four keys for a healthier America:

- Be physically active each day.
- Eat a nutritious diet.
- Get preventive screenings.
- Make healthy choices.

To learn more about *HealthierUS*, visit www.healthierus.gov.



United States Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service

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HealthierUS School Challenge

Recognizing
Nutrition
Excellence in
Schools



HealthierUS School Challenge

Obesity is a growing concern for school children in the United States. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) believes that schools should be taking a leadership role in helping students learn to make healthy eating and active lifestyle choices. Many schools have already made changes to their school nutrition environments, improved the quality of the foods served, and now provide students with more nutritious, healthy choices. USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) wants to encourage schools to achieve such results, and has established the *HealthierUS School Challenge* to encourage schools to go further and to recognize those who choose to do so.

HealthierUS Schools

HealthierUS Schools can be certified as either Silver or Gold Schools, according to standards established by FNS. The objective is to recognize schools that take specific steps to improve their programs and address obesity and to encourage other schools to follow their lead. The first year of the challenge focuses on elementary schools. FNS would like to see all elementary schools make the challenge: Go for the Silver! Go for the Gold!

How Does It Work?

Schools must meet a basic set of criteria. To be certified, a school must:

- ✱ be an elementary school
- ✱ be enrolled as a Team Nutrition School
- ✱ offer reimbursable lunches that demonstrate healthy menu planning practices and principles of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and that meet USDA nutrition standards
- ✱ provide nutrition education to students
- ✱ provide students the opportunity for physical activity
- ✱ maintain an Average Daily Participation of 70 percent or higher of school enrollment for reimbursable lunches
- ✱ adhere to guidelines established by FNS for foods served/sold in schools outside the National School Lunch Program.

Assessment

FNS has developed a Self Assessment Tool which details the standards that must be met for "Silver" and "Gold" level designations. The tool requests specific information to verify a school's adherence to the standards. The school completed Assessment Tool must be evaluated by a local review panel, and endorsed by the school's leadership, including its principal. Completed Assessment Tools will be forwarded to FNS through the State Child Nutrition Office.

Recognition

FNS will review all completed Assessment Tools and award schools that successfully meet the Challenge with an appropriate recognition plaque. In addition, the recognized schools will be listed on the Team Nutrition Web site. Schools may be chosen to be a part of special FNS media events and may receive other awards that promote and support the principles of the Challenge.

